

Guide

# D&I Communications Strategy Tips and Considerations

SERAMOUNT  
WE EMPOWER INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES





## D&I Communications Strategy Tips and Considerations

This guide will provide a brief outline of how corporations are leveraging their internal and external corporate communications regarding diversity and inclusion initiatives.

There are quite a few areas where the business impact of communicating diversity and inclusion efforts will have the greatest impact, mainly in the areas of workforce, workplace, supplier diversity and marketplace. Sharing your stories of success and community impact will resonate internally and externally with both consumers and your business partners. Investing in your own narrative of the diversity and inclusion progress reinforces the strategy and provides additional perspective and access beyond what key stakeholders are reading.

Inclusive leaders now understand that current employees and prospective candidates not only want companies to be socially responsible, they want them to be social activists, too.

Here are the top ten things to consider when preparing diversity and inclusion communications:

### 1. Utilize Multiple Channels

Make sure the communications are expressed across all mediums. (e.g. CEO statements, Town Hall meetings, Organizational Website, Social Media platforms, Newsletters, etc.) and be sure to partner with Corporate Communications to determine the right medium for and the right timing for your message.

### 2. Highlight Personal Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Identify senior leaders who are willing to share their passion for the charitable or community causes they personally support.

### CEO D&I Statement on Website

Be sure to have communications featured on your website including comments from your CEO regarding diversity and inclusion. This will ensure when job seekers, potential customers and potential consumers search your organization regarding diversity and inclusion they will never have a search yielding zero or limited results. To recruit the best available talent in today's competitive landscape best practice is to provide as much transparency into the culture, senior leadership activities and key initiatives to tell the most compelling reasons top diverse talent will want to join your organization. By 2020, Millennials will comprise 75% of the US workforce and 50% of the global workforce and are interested in working for companies that have empathy and support the values and cultural behaviors that align with their own.

### 3. Celebrate the Diversity of Your Community

Kick off diversity awareness activities with a written or short video message from a member of the senior leadership team. This communication will have a great impact both internally and externally. Communicate big wins from your Diversity Business Councils and Employee Resource Groups, especially community impact and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

#### **4. Partner with Corporate Communications**

Include your corporate communications team members in your diversity and inclusion Strategy sessions and Business Resource Group meetings. Be sure to discuss the timing of communications in order to embed diversity and inclusion in the overall corporate communications schedule.

#### **5. Gather and Share Testimonials to Tell the Diversity and Inclusion Story**

Share testimonials and quotes from the members of your Business/Employee Resource Groups on both internal and external communications. These testimonials should be included in marketing elements to recruit future talent.

#### **6. Acknowledge Individual Employee Contributions**

Provide internal communications that feature Business/Employee Resource Group Leaders acknowledging their efforts and commitment to the values of the organization.

#### **7. Highlight Customer, Consumer and Supplier Stories**

Internal communications should include customer, consumer and supplier stories from diverse communities thanking employees for their contributions in the communities they live, work and play.

#### **8. Celebrate Global Cultures with Dignity and Respect**

Global companies should implement communications celebrating diversity which features the richness of cultures from around the world. Make sure the communication expresses both dignity and respect for the person, group or culture.

#### **9. Understand that Internal is External**

In the process of preparing all internal communications it is important to always prepare them like you are speaking directly to your customers and consumers as well.

#### **10. Address Challenging (and sometimes divisive) Societal Issues**

Assemble a Crisis Team or SWAT Team to determine the appropriate action. Proper responses from leadership will reduce unfortunate and stressful distractions to high performance teams and most of all show employees that you care.

## **Key considerations when determining the appropriate response to challenging societal issues**

As key leaders of our organizations, we need tools, strategies and the right tactics to respond with careful thoughtfulness when responding to societal issues. Proper responses from leadership will reduce unfortunate and stressful distractions.

We cannot ignore the reality of our societal issues and how they are affecting our workforce and potentially diminishing our employee creativity and outcomes of high-performance teams.

Activism at all levels of management is expected more now than ever, especially in the ranks of our Chief Executive Officers, Chief Human Resources Officers, and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers. Creating CRISIS/SWAT Teams to quickly assemble to design and deliver the appropriate response(s) to current issues or determine the issue requires a “no response” decision. These teams consist of a collection of leaders from across the organization. (i.e. CEO, CHRO, CDO, HR, Legal, Communications, ERG Leaders and key employees who may serve as community Leaders in various key non-profits and mission-based organizations)

The unfortunate side of addressing many societal issues that affect high performing diverse teams is oftentimes, two opposing thoughts may exist for one specific issue which causes unwanted tensions in the workplace.

Amid the challenge of determining our appropriate response, there are several questions to consider.

Do we assemble our Crisis Team or SWAT Team to determine the appropriate action?

Is a response required? If so, does this issue require a personal statement from the CEO? Should there be multiple supportive signatures? CEO, CHRO, CDO, Employee Resource Group Leaders (collective or just the group impacted)?

What internal actions will be taken to address the issue, if any? Does the appropriate action require a corporate policy change? Should we host an intimate employee roundtable, or does it require an all colleague meeting?

Does the action taken in response express genuine concern for all those affected?

It's hard to believe 50 years after the passage of Title VII so many issues still persist. However, addressing difficult conversations will require senior leaders to create an environment of gender equity, mutual respect and fostering a culture of inclusion allowing employees the ability to speak openly about differing perceptions and experiences.

Senior leaders who participate as champions of equity will also have to clearly articulate the company's position, policies and penalties in regard to unacceptable behavior and still encourage their managers to be inclusion advocates to build productive relationships within and across teams.

It is now apparent with many employees becoming more emboldened to share their personal thoughts on societal issues within the workplace our challenge of maintaining a climate for mutual respect for all cultural backgrounds, gender differences and experiences has become an ever-increasing complex problem.

Diversity Best Practices members have easy access to the resource guides and tools Diversity Best Practices has developed to support our members in their diversity and inclusion efforts.

- **Conference Materials** to extend the learning beyond our live events including member conferences, web seminars and teleconferences.
- **Heritage Month Resource Hub includes a** guide for every Heritage Month and is updated regularly.
- **Hot Topics Resource Guides** are great tools to guide critical conversations about challenging topics.

Organizations can no longer rely solely on employee engagement surveys to get a pulse on employee culture. Current and former employees are sharing their negative and positive workplace experiences on platforms like Glassdoor and InHerSight, which makes it more important to regularly share impactful positive stories both internally and externally.

Sometimes it may take more than a communication and senior leaders will have to make decisions regarding creating internal ongoing conversations to identify and address negative concerns before they go public. Bold and inclusive leadership will become the new standard for other leading companies to follow.